

## INTRODUCTION

### **2002 Arizona Youth Survey**

#### **State of Arizona**

This report summarizes some of the findings from the 2002 Arizona Youth Student Survey administered to 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in the State of Arizona during January, February and March 2002. The results by county are presented along with overall results for the State. The survey was designed to assess school safety, adolescent substance use, anti-social behavior and the risk and protective factors that predict these adolescent problem behaviors.

The participating schools were selected to ensure that students from all counties and who attend large and small schools were represented in the survey. Careful selection of the schools that were sampled and uniform administration of the survey have resulted in survey data that are valid and representative of the students in grades 8, 10 and 12 in Arizona.

#### **What is the Risk and Protective Factor Framework?**

Risk- and protective-factor focused prevention is based on a simple premise: To prevent a problem from happening, we need to identify the factors that increase the risk of that problem developing and then find ways to reduce the risks. Just as medical researchers have found risk factors for heart attacks such as diets high in fats, lack of exercise, and smoking, a team of researchers at the University of Washington has defined a set of risk factors for drug abuse. The research team also found that some children exposed to multiple risk factors manage to avoid behavior problems later even though they were exposed to the same risks as children who exhibited behavior problems. Based on research, they identified protective factors and processes that work together to buffer children from the effects of high-risk exposure and lead to the development of healthy behaviors.

Risk factors include characteristics of community, family, and school environments, and characteristics of students and their peer groups, that are known to predict increased likelihood of drug use, delinquency, and violent behaviors among youth (Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992; Hawkins, Arthur & Catalano, 1995; Brewer, Hawkins, Catalano & Neckerman, 1995).

Protective factors exert a positive influence or buffer against the negative influence of risk, thus reducing the likelihood that adolescents will engage in problem behaviors. Protective factors identified through research reviewed by the Social Development Research Group include individual characteristics; social bonding to family, school, community, and peers; and healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior.